

The Royal Road to Learning

By FRANCES L. GARSIDE

IT REALLY looks as if the time were coming when young folks will proudly say, "I am a graduate of the movies," indicating that they acquired all their knowledge of books along the royal road to learning that leads to the door of a motion picture theater.

For, more and more, films are becoming educational, and the pioneers in this work are women, two of them, and young at that. They are Marguerite Pennell Gove and Ora Carter Colton, and their mission in life is to put the educational idea into a motion picture.

These young women contend that anything calculated to give inspiration to those who witness the fast-moving picture is of real and immediate educational value. Therefore they go in for the picturing of anything from science in its myriad forms to athletic feats and the decorations of homes.

You may think this is easy. If you do, try grasping an idea out of the air. Suppose, for instance, they wanted to tell the story of the man who became a millionaire by picking up rags. It sounds like fiction; it is an oft-told fact. But when the pictures were taken there would be nothing in it but rags. There must be more to the story; it must have its thrills; it must have its educational feature. So much is to be considered that these young women, while relaying out and rolling and macadamizing a royal path to learning for the little feet of future generations to travel, have no royal time of it themselves.

In the beginning there was serious objection on the part of those who were to be "taken." The movies were entertaining, they contended, but in an amusing way; they did not want their callings classed under that head. But the movies have climbed in public estimation, and now there is hardly a man or woman of learning who is not willing to give his discovery, or invention, or whatever it may be, to the world. He wants the public to know what he is doing. He is making the discovery that through the motion picture exploitation of his work he is adding to the world's education.

The "plot" chosen, there is next the writing of the scenario, which, in this work, is not a description of the villain, but the story of the beginning of the idea. Then come the captions which appear on the screen to help educate the people after the whole series of pictures has been visualized.

One reel showed a young woman making stuffed animals for children to play with. They showed her first at the Zoo making friends with the real animals. Then they took her in her studio working out the patterns for the stuffed species, and then they showed her pushing in the padding to give them the proper shape. That is not all, for they proceed to animate these strange-looking beasts, making them indulge in antics. One may readily see that through a reel like this the child gets a lesson in natural history, with a

smile thrown in that makes the lesson of longer memory than if it were committed from the pages of a book.

They take pictures of corrective health exercises. They discovered that 80 per cent of the women of the world were accustomed to walk wrongly and to hold themselves in incorrect positions. Pictures were made of run-down heels, pictures of the chorus girls' feet, of the mannish woman's feet, of the hod carrier's; in fact, of all sorts of feet. It might be called more than a lesson illustrating the folly of ill-treating the feet; it might be called a lesson in leather, for naturally such a film told the story of the leather before it became a shoe.

The Story of the Snowflake pictures snow crystals in their varied forms; children, who had thought of snow as merely something to slide upon, leave the theater with their little minds amazed at the variety and beauty of the flakes that come swirling down; they have all the thrills that are excited by a drama, and none of its unhealthful emotions.

"The motion of the heart and of the lungs," says Mrs. Gove, "the circulation of the blood, are excellent teachers of physics when visualized on the screen. Now and then tornadoes are born; what causes an eclipse; how great astronomers think we may communicate with Mars; the intricate and inside operation of machines; linotypes; calculating machines; the Lewis gun; aerial and depth bombs; the gas engine, etc., are surely better impressed on the mind with motion pictures than with the unattractive word, spoken or read.

"I contend that as an educational factor, the animated cartoon has a future that is unlimited."

At present Mrs. Gove is engaged on a series entitled Master Minds of America. This means the selecting of men who represent certain types; picturing them at work, telling something of their work and home life, etc.

Mrs. Colton is working on the pictured story of "People You'd Like to Know." Wouldn't you like, for instance, to know more about John Burroughs? Mary Roberts Rinehart? You feel as if you lived next door after seeing one of these pictures.

"We work on the belief," said Mrs. Colton, "that the whole world is going to school. We think of the general public; we put ourselves in its place, and when



MARGUERITE PENNELL GOVE

we go into a workshop to tell a pictured story of what we see there we simply translate technical subjects into a language laymen can understand. And by 'laymen' we mean folk of all ages from six to sixty."

The tremendous value of the screen as a factor in educational life is receiving a belated appreciation. The credit for impressing this value upon the public is due largely to these young women pioneers in the motion picture field.

She Makes Toys That Children Love



OLIVE EARLE and two of her creations.

ONCE Upon a Time there was a young girl and she had a big idea. She did not let it fall asleep under the moss that collects in one's brain the same as you or I might have done, she—But all this is getting ahead of the story.

Eight years ago there came to this country a young girl from England named Olive Earle. She tried various kinds of employment, and two years ago found her temporarily assisting a friend who conducted a gift shop in New York City.

Now a gift shop contains everything there is to sell, for the reason that there are no folks who do not like gifts, and they represent every age and nationality. Olive Earle waited on them a month, guiding them safely to the gift that would please most the one for whom it was intended, and saving many an anticipating recipient from receiving something he (or she) never wanted and could have no use for.

All this time Miss Earle's mind was very busy with plans for gifts, and one day the Big Idea came! She did not say, "Oh, what's the use? Others might make a success of it, and such luck never comes to ME." She did not stop to think; she went to a neighborhood ten cent store and put the big idea at work by purchasing for ten cents a Turkish towel, and every one knows what kind of a Turkish towel that might be.

But neither its size nor its lack of Turkishness daunted her, and taking it home she cut a lamb from it, stuffed it with cotton, and the next day the lamb in the gift shop window attracted a customer, and brought its creator a dollar and fifty cents. She bought more towels, she made more lambs, till

the lamb Olive had in the beginning had become the bellwether of a whole flock of sheep. She found orders were coming in faster than she could fill them, so she engaged a young colored girl as an assistant. Then more colored girls, and as her corps of workers increased she changed the pattern and began turning out giraffes, polar bears, dogs, camels; not all of Turkish towels, for one of the next of her creations was a litter of pink muslin pigs followed by a herd of yellow cambric elephants. She made silly lions of blue with green tails and fierce purple eyes; she put a wreath of forget-me-nots around the neck of the giraffe and found it increased his value in the eyes of the little children who thereafter demanded similar floral trimmings for other animals.

This all happened Once Upon a Time not more than two or three years ago: Now, the making of her cloth-cotton-zoo has been taken over by the People's Institute of New York City, and made the special industry at the Lincoln House, in the heart of a colored settlement. Many women are supporting themselves making these animals which are now cut out by electricity; Miss Earle then sat back and collected a royalty.

But, no, that is not quite the case. She didn't sit back a moment; having turned over her cloth covered zoo, she began to make animals of wood so constructed that every limb of the animal moves. This has also been taken over by a manufacturer who is turning out animals of this kind by the wholesale, but even then Miss Earle didn't sit back and rest while her laurels wilted, as so many might do.

She freshened them by putting out grab-bags made of animals, the bag containing little gifts opening in the animal's back; horse reins with animals on, etc. "My head is just full of ideas," she said, "and it is only a lack of time that prevents me from putting these ideas into motion."

Miss Earle advises children to make animals out of Turkish bath towels, so don't blame the laundryman if towels are missing. Blame her! She says a good-sized towel will make quite a flock of waddling ducks and wobbly lambs, and if they are not reproduced according to nature, so much the better, for they must reflect the imagination of the child and have enough humor so that they will be pleasant companions to have around.

"Any child who, on returning from the Zoo, cuts out a bird or an animal has a mind enriched by the effort and experience, and a beloved plaything as well."